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In This Issue:

"A Tale of Two Ready Rooms"

beginning on page 2

GUEST EDITORIAL

PHC Chet King

Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery ...

Or is It?

By Cdr. John D. Reid

HOW many times have you heard the saying "Train the way you fight"? It means that we need realistic practice, so we can get rid of the unknowns before the real thing. FFARP, Fallon, Red Flag, low levels, EMCON . . . you name it. They are all exercises for the squadron leaders to show how it's done and train young aviators in the art of aerial combat.

The young guys look up to their leaders. Sometimes they are awestruck by the leaders' skill and uncanny judgement in the air. Nuggets often base their standard of performance on the level that they observe. They wonder, "How long will it take before I'm that good?" or, "He makes it look so easy. He's the best in the squadron." Of course, the old guys love it. It's neat being admired and having a good reputation.

The question is, do the old guys always perform in a manner that deserves emulation? Have you forgotten that you may have unwittingly endorsed the actions of "good old Joe," whose mortal soul departed mother earth because he flew into the water putting on a show for his friends on the beach? You may have condoned his actions by the way you related the story of his death. Did you plant the seeds of careless adventure in the mind of a young aviator? Or, when you concluded the sea story, did you condemn his actions?

As the old salt of a squadron, your actions are frequently scrutinized and critiqued by the young guys. Have you really set the example?

Do you take the time to plan a "routine" cross-country with the same care that you brief a tactics hop? Granted, it's not as exciting, but think about what you are saying to that nugget if you don't do it right. What do you instill in him when you grab a few jet logs and say you'll complete them airborne?

It is tempting to overlook the colorful actions of an aviator because he is well-liked and fits the hard-charging image. How well did you debrief that hot rendezvous on the tanker? How close is too close at the pass? That young aviator may not understand that pressing the target may improve his scores now, but when he eventually flies into the dirt, he's going to hit long. No one wants to stifle enthusiasm and aggressiveness, but sound air discipline and following the procedures will increase that young aviator's chances of becoming an old aviator. Ignoring lapses in judgment or carelessness only reinforces their acceptance by those who see them.

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In spite of NATOPS, young pilots or crews still get overcome with an uncontrollable urge to perform an unauthorized air show or go on a poorly planned (or even unauthorized) low-level while on a cross-country. Has the command, by lack of direction or command influence, condoned this behavior? Some young aviators confuse intelligent aggressiveness with foolhardy abandon and disregard for regulations. What has your command done to ensure crews learn from their mistakes, and to convince them showing off and disregarding regulations will not be tolerated?

Is operational necessity in peacetime worth taking short cuts? How many up-gripes do you allow? Is that sortie worth not having a CDI done on the ejection seat before flight? Every time we bend or break a rule, we are telling our subordinates that the action was acceptable. We pass this behavior on from generation to generation because we reinforce it. We passively reinforce it when we take no action to stop it. It sometimes takes a mishap to bring these shortcomings to everybody's attention.

Look at the command atmosphere in your squadron. Sound airborne discipline and ground procedures don't detract from good morale and the thrill of flying, which are more fun than convening a mishap board. As a respected aviator, your daily activities – both professional and social – greatly influence your squadron's young aviators. Will your actions (or lack of actions) influence one of your squadronmates to flat-hat, perform an unauthorized maneuver, put on an air show for his family, or accept a less than ready aircraft for flight? ◄

Cdr. Reid is a RIO. He is Head of the Naval Safety Center's Media and Education Support Division.

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Capt. J.H. Finney, Commander, Naval Safety Center
Col. John P. Oppenhuizen, Deputy Commander
Capt. W.J. Mooberry, Chief of Staff
Capt. K.G. Craig, Director, Aviation Safety Programs
Cdr. John D. Reid, Head, Media and Educational Support
Lt. Ward Carroll, Editor
Peter Mersky, Asst. Editor
Robert Trotter, Art Director

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A Tale of Two Ready Rooms

By LCdr. Lenny Fox

"As I decelerated through 100 knots, the plane began to hydroplane and swerve to the left. It was all I could do to stay on the runway. I'm telling you, don't let anyone talk you out of making a trap on a wet runway."

IT was a no-fly Monday morning. AOM time in Corsair country. Barry came through the NAS back gate in the right seat of JD's black "Z." The metallic dealer's logo identified the car as a prize from Pensacola where the two pilots first met during aviation indoctrination. They were now partners in a three-bedroom house that had a spa and was in a good neighborhood. They were working hard to establish a reputation as proprietors of a snake ranch.

The pilots had recently graduated from the RAG and were now certified to deliver ordnance. They had drawn assignments to sister squadrons. Barry's unit was high-spirited and enjoyed good press. JD's squadron, on the other hand, did not have such a glowing reputation. Mindful of base security, JD rounded the curve on the road to the Ops side at just over 55.

"Have they changed your call sign, yet?"

"Not yet," Barry replied. He was not hard over on a call sign but liked the one he had: "Bear." JD, however, was fanatically protective of "Stud," which he had given himself while flying the primary syllabus at Whiting.

As he cleared the last overpass, JD came off the throttle and threw the car into neutral. He knew the numbers by heart. If the station wagons and Blazers did not obstruct his path, he would not have to touch the pedal again. The coast was clear, and he drove a flawless precautionary approach to his personalized parking spot.

"See you at lunch?"

"No. Gotta fly," Barry said. "See you at 1630."

JD headed for the ready room. Afraid that his timing might be a little too close, he ran up the stairs and came in the back way, through the head and locker room, to take his station in the last row of sturdy, high-backed chairs. He was Dash-16, but not the last to arrive. As the others filtered in, there was some good-natured banter about weekend exploits. But, to a man, when they took their seats, they did so with a sense of resignation. They were bracing themselves for what experience had taught them would be less than enjoyable.

"What time does the 0800 AOM start?" someone yelled.

It was 0805 and some key players were missing. The CO was on the phone to the Chief of Staff discussing format mistakes on a recent squadron OPREP. The Ops O was camped outside Rocket One's office to clarify a few items before the meeting. The XO, arms folded and shoulder against the wall, sat in view of the Skipper through his office door. He was frustrated in his attempt to round up the other two. He had been to the ready room once and left in a huff after the comment at 0805.

"Yes, sir," the Skipper said as he took his eyes off his XO and stared at the far edge of his desk. "Yes, sir," he echoed once more in a lower tone that carried a note of finality. He replaced the receiver, raised his right hand, gave the two-finger turn-up signal and left for the ready room with the XO and Ops O in tow. The 0800 AOM started at 0812.

"Safety?" The Ops O started the familiar roll call of department heads.

"Nothing from Safety."

JD suddenly remembered his duties as division officer and reached between his legs to tear a piece of note paper from the drawer on his chair.

"Safety – nothing," he wrote.

After 40 minutes, he had exorcised the surplus verbiage and logged the salient points amid a sea of nondescript doodles.

"Oh, by the way," Ops said, "the boat is coming up. You gotta break out the CV NATOPS and put in a little study so we don't look like buffoons – especially you guys in the back row who haven't seen much of carrier ops." With one abrupt remark, he had removed four junior aviators from the ranks of their fellow professionals and labeled them second-class, prime "Buffoon" candidates.

"Skipper?"

"Thank you, Ops. Gents, the most important thing I want to cover today is our OPREP procedures. . ."

JD's mind began to wander.

"JD?"

"Uh, oh," JD thought, "The AOM is over and the Ops O is coming my way. Did I remember to fill out a smooth flight schedule when I was SDO Friday? I'm pretty sure I did. Maybe I forgot to log simulated instrument time on my last yellow sheet."

"JD, I need you to fly that exercise down south this Saturday. Any problem?"

"No, not at all. Can do." Good news, more flight time for the Stud.

No breakfast and the AOM had left a hole in JD's stomach that he hoped to fill with a large Pepsi and a moon pie. On the way to the gedunk, he swung by Barry's squadron to tell him that Saturday's trip to the beach was off. He entered the duty office just as the phone rang.

"Light Attack ASDO. May I help you, sir?"

The petty officer acknowledged JD's presence with his eyes and his free hand as he signalled "One moment, please."

He cracked the door to the ready room.

"Excuse me, Skipper, phone call."

"Please get the number and tell him I'll call him back after the AOM."

When the petty officer hung up, JD asked how long the meeting would last.

"Well, sir, they're scheduled to go until 1000, another 45 minutes."

"Thanks," JD said as he set out in search of nutrition.

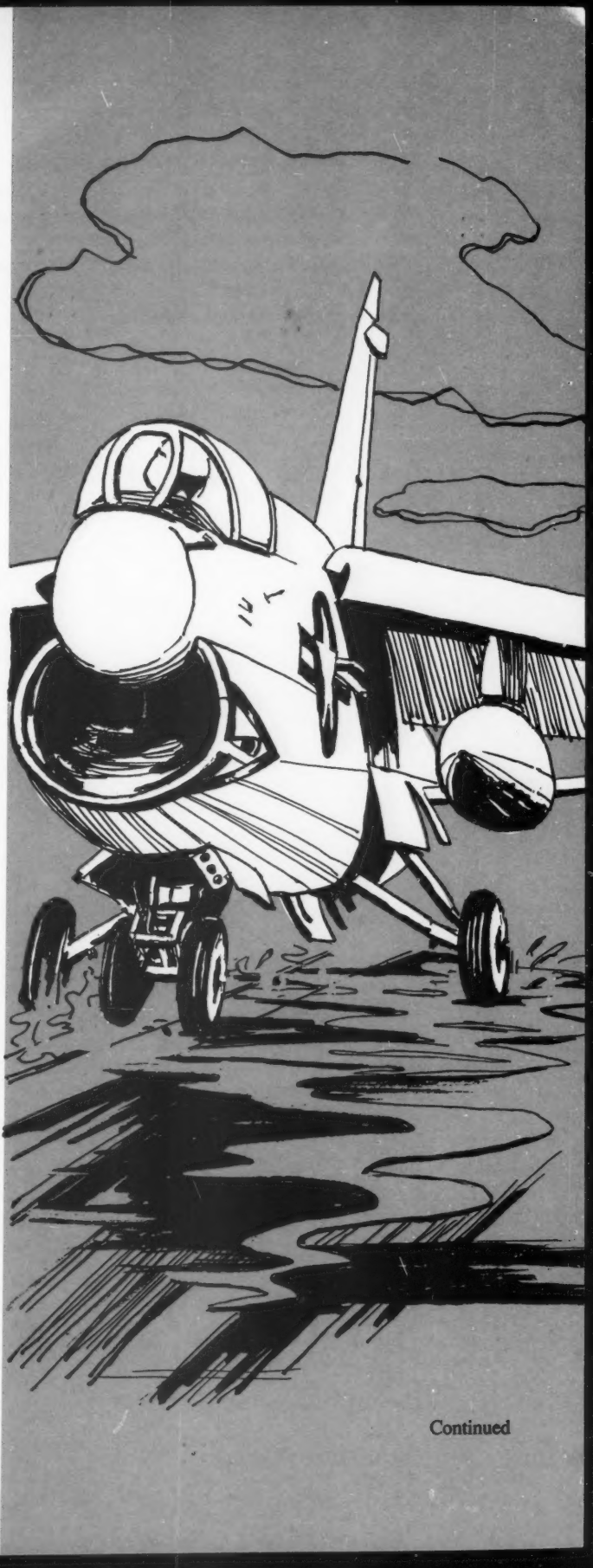
Looking for good food at the Navy Exchange snack bar was like searching for the Holy Grail in a city dump. What really hurt was that they were out of moon pies! A chocolate pudding pie – the pudding was fake – would have to do.

On his way back topside, JD tried again to find Barry. He bet the meeting would adjourn well before 10. But, as he approached the ready room, the noise inside told him he was wrong. Actually, the noise sounded like music – sort of. It was a refrain from a popular rock song. The squadron sang it every time their Intel Officer went to the podium to give a brief on current events. The ensign just shook his head and smiled.

"Amazing," JD thought, "the only ensign in the Navy with his own theme song."

The training officer sat next to Barry recording the events of the meeting.

The Skipper had the floor. "We have briefs in 20 minutes, so I'll be short. We're starting the transition from shore-based flying to carrier ops. The first thing we have to do to be combat-ready at sea is to get proficient around the boat. Let's make good use of our FCLPs and attack this CQ period with the same professionalism we've displayed in the past."



Continued

The CO paused, then continued, "I also want to relay an incident that happened to me last week. I flew in the front seat of a "T" at the RAG to preview the new software tape. When we returned to the field, I saw the runway from altitude. It looked like it had rained about 10 minutes earlier. There was no standing water, but the deck appeared slick. With the A-7's problems on wet runways, I was inclined to throw the hook down. The tower didn't have any reports about problems with braking and said the runway was almost dry.

"The IP in the back said he thought it would be OK, so I took my hand off the hook handle and made a normal landing. As I decelerated through 100 knots, the plane began to hydroplane and swerve to the left. It went through three gyrations before straightening out. It was all I could do to stay on the runway. I'm telling you, don't let anyone talk you out of making a trap on a wet runway!"

The Skipper looked at his pilots, gauging the affect of his story. "OK, all pilots do your weekly boldface exam and turn your read-and-initial cards green. Let's get on with business."

JD slipped into the cockpit of his Z and turned on the radio as he waited for Barry.

"Sorry I'm late," Barry said. "The debrief went into overtime."

"No sweat," JD replied, "I just got here, myself." Checking out the nimble response of his rack-and-pinion steering, JD told Barry that he had to fly on Saturday.

"Me, too," his roommate replied. "You going to NAS South and back?"

"Sure am," JD said. "Sounds like we have the same brief."

Saturday's schedule called for a launch to the exercise area, a quick refueling at NAS South, a return to the area, then back to home base. Barry would preceed JD by 20 minutes. The mission was neither demanding nor interesting, but it was flight time.

Barry was on his descent to home base, weaving his way through a line of storybook cumulus in the late afternoon sun. When he left the last of the clouds, he broke out into a world of 30-mile visibility: bright, blue sky, and shining green fields, damp from a recent squall. As he approached 10 miles, he took a good look at the runway. It looked slick. When he asked for braking action, the tower replied that no one had landed since the rain, but that there was only a light drizzle and no standing water.

Barry reported five miles with the gear and hook down for an arrested landing.

"Roger, cleared to land." The tower sounded disappointed.

As Barry debriefed the duty section AQ on an INS velocity problem, the airman standing the line watch burst into Maintenance Control.

"An A-7 just crashed on the runway!"

Driven by a fraternal duty to witness the event, even if he couldn't help, Barry ran out of the hangar. He saw the A-7 on the side of the runway, crashed, but intact, slightly cocked, right wing down. It was JD's aircraft. He had decided to make a normal landing, without a hook, and ended up with his starboard mainmount in the mud at the six-board.

The Safety Officer arrived, followed by the MO and CO. Embarrassed, JD stood by the scene of his crime, awaiting either a chewing out, or a word of consolation. He got neither. The Skipper busied himself with monitoring the effort to get out the required messages in the proper format. The MO supervised the gathering of equipment needed to extricate the Corsair.

The Safety officer turned to the CO. "If we're lucky," he said, "this won't even be a Class Charlie."

JD overheard the ASO, but it did little to relieve his anxiety. He leaned against the front bumper of the crash truck and watched as people took statements and photographs.

It was well past sunset by the time the plane finished its less-than-graceful journey to the line. Backlit by the spotlight above the hangar door, JD eyed the lame bird. He numbly scratched information on a yellow sheet. The salty senior chief behind the maintenance desk made an offhand comment that his call sign might be changed from Stud to "Mud."

With a bruised ego and a hollow feeling in his gut that even a moon pie couldn't fill, JD walked out of Maintenance Control with his patient roommate.

"Cheer up, roomy," Barry said as JD took the wheel of his Pensacola pride and joy.

"Stupid!" JD yelled as he punched the dash, driving 65 on the road from Ops. As he rounded the curve he had to put on the brakes and kill the lights for the guard.

"Stupid! Why didn't I see it coming?"

Barry shrugged his shoulders. He wasn't sure. JD had the gouge on A-7s and wet runways, didn't he? ◄

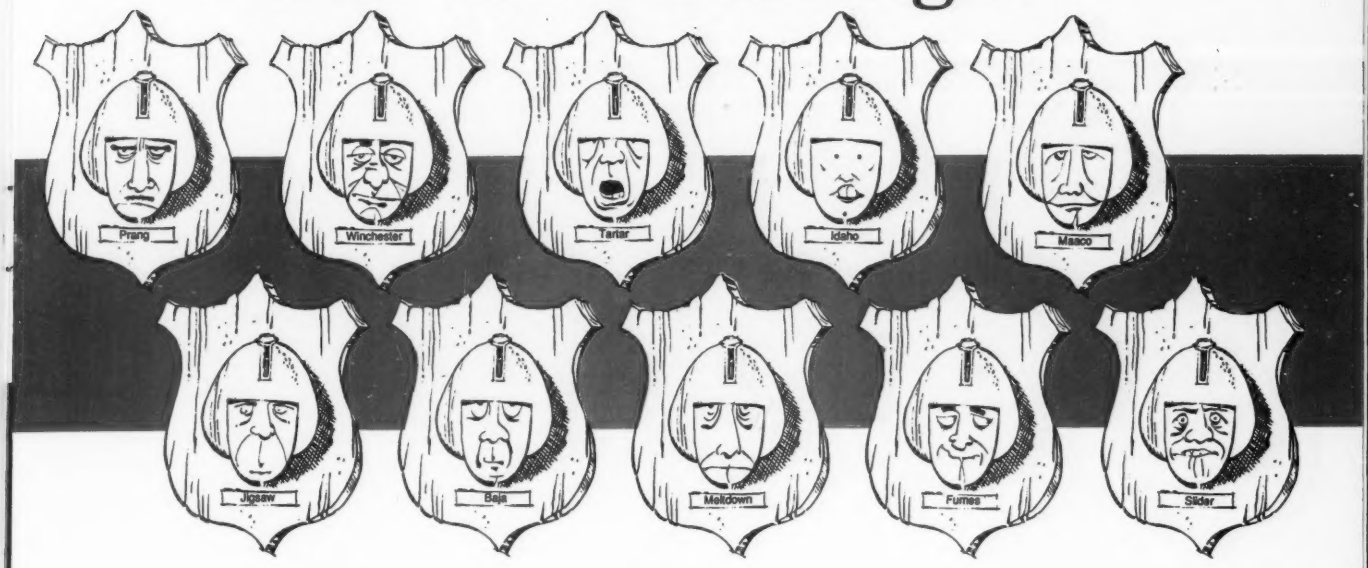
LCdr. Fox is an F/A-18 pilot with VFA-195.

If you make people think they're thinking, they'll love you. If you really make them think, they'll hate you.

Don Marquis
American author

What's In a Call Sign?

By Lt. Frank Ridley



ONE of my strongest memories of my first days in a fleet squadron is of the cruise plaques that adorned the walls of our ready room. They spoke volumes about the generations of aviators who preceded me as "Mighty Shrikes." Back then, almost all of them were strangers. During the next three years, I would come to know many of them, either in person or through hearing stories about them.

Shortly after checking in, I was standing around, looking at a plaque. I collared a cruise-experienced JO and asked him to explain one of the call signs. "How did that guy get the call sign 'Winchester'?" I asked.

"Well," he explained, "one time, Winchester was flying an alpha strike and he selected 'master arm' about 50 miles from the target. A couple of minutes later he decided to try a navigation update, and instead of designating, he hit the pickle switch. Six Mk-82's just missed a civilian road crew. He called the strike lead on the radio and said, 'Skipper, I, uh, just went Winchester.' The name stuck."

That sounded interesting to me. I moved to another plaque and asked about the call sign "Idaho."

"One night he was flying a CCA to the ship in bad weather. He fixated on his needles and didn't cross-check his altimeter and DME. When he broke out, he was so low the LSOs swore it was a miracle that he didn't end up in the spud locker. He was 'Idaho' ever after."

By now I was hooked. "Slider?" I asked.

"Slider got that by landing gear up. Seems he led a brand new guy into the break one day. Slider got distracted somehow and forgot to lower his gear. The kicker is that tower called him on short final and told him his gear appeared up, but he was so sure it was the new guy that he didn't bother to check."

"Wow," I exclaimed. "One more?"

"Sure."

"How'd this guy get 'Tartar'?"

My guide grinned. "One time he made it to an emergency field by the skin of his teeth. He was on a low level when his throttle jammed at some ridiculously low power setting. Because he knew exactly where he was and had scanned his divert field chart in the brief, he made it to the emergency field by the skin of his teeth. Twenty seconds of indecision would have cost the squadron a jet. As it was, he made a great save."

"Sierra hotel," I muttered. My friend drifted off, but I continued to look at the names on the plaques. So many of these aviators had distinguished themselves by successes or failures. Their names and call signs are the stuff of history and legend.

I was already making up a list of call signs that I didn't want to earn: "Baja" (for going off a runway into the dirt), "Prang" (for smashing up an aircraft), "Maaco" (ditto, the name of a national chain of auto body shops), "Fumes" (for running out of gas), "Meltdown" (for getting in a position where I'd have to stand on the brakes), "Jigsaw" (for acting puzzled).

No, when my name went up on one of those plaques, I wanted my call sign to be colorful, sexy and mysterious, not a sign post to a screw-up. ◄

Lt. Ridley is VA-94's NATOPS officer and the squadron's senior LSO. He recently completed his second Westpac/IO cruise in USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65).

Heavy

By Lt. Wilk O. West

FLYING on Sunday. Bad omen! We were also getting the early afternoon buildups that were typical of summertime at our NAS Southeast training base. However, time was running out for us to make our yearly PTR, and we needed to get a few students through the ACM syllabus.

After the brief, the ODO assigned our jets. We studied the weather TV and looked at the radar presentation: three-thousand-foot ceiling, some scattered buildups.

"No sweat," our flight lead said. Of course, he was being optimistic; he was solo as the bogey, and I was in a student's back seat. As we walked to Maintenance Control, we could see darker clouds to the north and east, near the departure end of our field's north-south runway. Most of our weather moves from southwest to northeast, so we figured that the storm *should* be moving away from us. As the students went through their plane captain checks, we continued watching the buildups.

After getting through our final checks, we could soon see occasional flickers of lightning in the east. Our lead pulled up next to us. By now, even he looked doubtful. Base called us and told us about the "bumper" building to the north.

After a brief discussion on the radio, tower cemented our decision to postpone our launch by telling us it was starting to rain on the north runway. We grudgingly taxied back to our original parking spots and shut down. As we walked back, the rain started coming down, slowly at first, with giant drops. We ran the rest of the way and headed upstairs to the duty office.

Our duty desk overlooks the flightline, and during the short time it took for us to walk upstairs, the rain had intensified. The thunder and lightning corroborated our decision to wait. Soon, it was raining so hard that it was difficult to see all the jets on the flightline. In five minutes, there were times when we couldn't see the orange-and-white planes only 50 feet away! The TV now

Weather

reported thundershowers with 3/4-mile visibility. Wind was 16 knots, with gusts to 24.

As we looked outside, I thought that something didn't look right down the two long lines of TA-4s. Then, it hit me: the jets were *moving*. No one believed me, but as I threw off my LPA and ran to the door, the rest of the instructors took renewed interest. I ran down to the line via Maintenance Control and told them that our 18,000-pound Scooters were taking a Sunday stroll. All the aircraft had chains near each parking spot, but because the weather hit so quickly, none of them had been tied down. I ran to one jet that was *definitely* out of its parking place.

The wind had worked the chocks loose, and the planes were now all headed into or away from the wind. Fuel probes were inches away from fuselages, riding over wings. It took me a while to figure out the chains but reinforcements were coming, and the wind and rain were beginning to abate. At about the time we had all the planes chained down, and were completely soaked, the rain slackened.

We stood out between the two rows, staring in amazement at the weird positions of our aircraft. It looked like the plane captains had parked 20 Fam-One students at the same time without

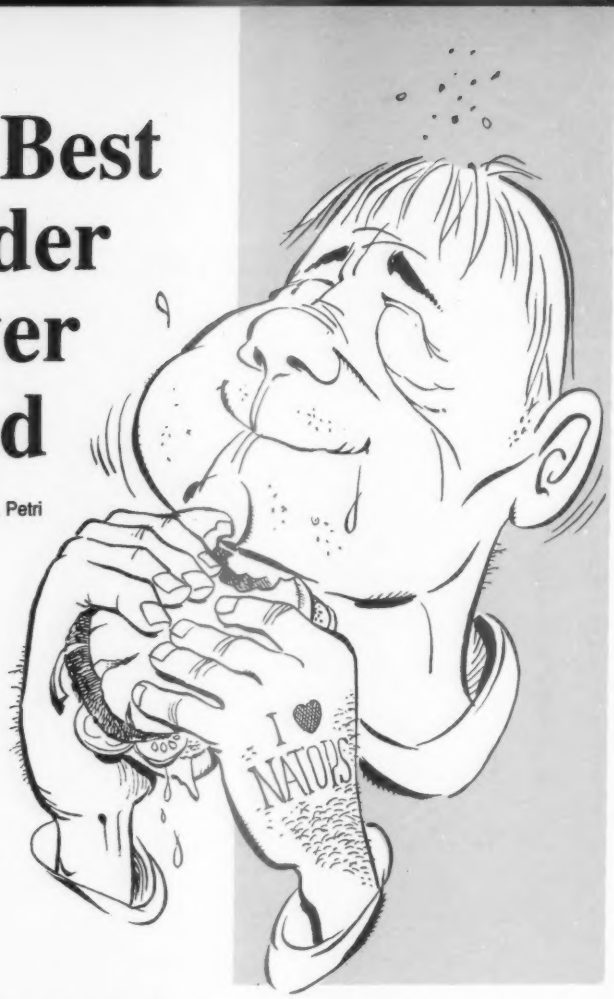
nosewheel steering. Luckily, there was no damage. One of the line buildings, a large house trailer on blocks, had moved two or three feet. Also, a chain-link fence had been blown onto the hoods of several cars parked nearby on the ramp. Ouch!

The weather report said peak gusts during this 10-minute maelstrom were 50 knots, but those gusts were 1/4-mile away. I think something like 75-knot winds shoved our Navy jets around. I'm glad we weren't flying. ◄

Lt. West was an instructor with VT-7 at the time of this story. He is currently going through the CAT III syllabus at VF-101.

The Best Slider I Ever Had

By Lt. David A. Petri



AS a nugget RIO, I had only heard rumors about how ugly EMCON – especially at night – can be. I would soon find out for myself as my experienced pilot and I launched for my first night EMCON hop.

The flight was a 2 v 2 AIC hop, with a pinky launch and a normal Case III recovery. We were a few minutes ahead of our wingman, but we expected a quick rendezvous. On the cat shot, we lost our INS/IMU platform and had to settle for AHRS. No big deal with a TACAN, a good radar, and a clear night. As we flew toward our station, however, the ship went EMCON, securing the TACAN at the same time my radar quit. The night also turned hazy as a high overcast rolled in and the horizon slowly disappeared. It was anyone's guess as to which way was up. We were slow joining up because of my system, my wingman's marginal radar, and a few erroneous vectors from the controllers. During this 30-minute rendezvous, tension began to build. It didn't help to discover it would also be an EMCON recovery. I felt comfortable with our DR navigation and procedures, so I wasn't too concerned. Even so, we decided to pass the lead to our wingman (who had a good INS) and pressed on to the tanker.

We had no problem finding the tanker, but tanking, itself, was a nightmare. The tanker's amber standby light lens was broken, showing white. It was also stuck in the day/bright position, causing vertigo, highlighted by the bright green, anti-collision light. We finally finished and left the tanker with two pilots and two RIOs with varying degrees of vertigo.

We pushed out of marshal on time and descended to 1,500 feet. The lead found the boat but wasn't sure of our position. After the flight, the lead pilot said, "I saw the boat, but I couldn't tell if the lights were on the horizon or in the air." We felt the same in our cockpit.

Our normal procedure was to lower the gear around 250 knots, and the flaps around 220 knots, with me calling, "250, gear," then, "200, flaps," as a backup. This night, I was waiting for the flaps, ready to call "200, flaps," when I glanced at the altimeter and saw what I thought was 1,600 feet. I immediately realized it was actually 600 feet and we were descending. I called, "600, pull up! 500, 400, pull up! 300, pull!" I felt the G and saw the rate of descent halt. What a relief. We climbed back to 1,000 feet, lowered the flaps, calmed down and recovered safely.

During the debrief, I discovered that my pilot also thought we were at 1,600 feet. It hadn't sunk in until my third "pull up" call that we had been descending below 600 feet. We're still not sure how we got so low. It's a scary thought considering it was a night EMCON and our squawks were secured. No one was aware of what happened and wouldn't have known we were missing for a while. After the debrief, we ate midrats. It was the best slider I ever had.

I knew my pilot had vertigo, but I didn't realize how badly. He should have told me. New RIOs should never get into the "he's-experienced" frame of mind. Old guys can drive you into the water just as easily as nuggets – well, almost. Trust your instruments during night EMCON. Obviously, some of your scan should be outside, but a solid instrument scan will save your life. ◄

Lt. Petri flies with VF-31 and is the squadron's Legal Officer.

The LSO Has Control

By Lt. Ted Cossette

RECENTLY, I was the LSO on an FFG-7-class ship. It wasn't my ship and was just out of the yard after being fitted for the LAMPS Mk. III landing system. Most of the ship's crew was green and needed to be taught every facet of RAST (Recovery, Assist, Secure and Traverse) landings. I was helping my squadron pilots get their RAST Landing Qualifications (RLQs).

The biggest problem was radio discipline. The helicopter control officer (HCO) in the tower had a little experience before the shipyard and thought he was a ham radio operator. Several times, with the aircraft over the flight deck, my attention was diverted by someone using the 1JG net for personal business.

"Hey, Joe! What are you doing tonight?"

The LSO needs to communicate with several people on the 1JG sound-powered phone. He has to talk to the LSE, the flight deck safety observer, the HCO, CIC and the bridge. All on the in-house side of his headset. Meanwhile, on the other side, UHF communications continue with the helicopter. The LSO needs his hands and feet to talk and to operate the tension on the RA (recovery-assist) haul-down cable, the RSD (rapid securing device) jaws, the landing signal light (stop light), and the deck-mounted microphone foot switch – all while he is talking to and conning the helicopter into position for landing. It's the perfect job for a helicopter pilot. The last thing anyone needs is a clobbered radio or 1JG network as the helicopter hovers over a pitching deck with men working beneath the aircraft.

I stressed the need for strict radio and intercommunications discipline, especially when the helicopter was over the deck. All in all, things were going OK. This was a day-into-night RLQ period. The sun was setting and we had just entered "pinky" time.

One Seahawk crew included a seasoned HAC and a nugget. The helicopter came over the deck and lowered the messenger cable. The hookup men came out of the port hangar and made the connection. The pilot raised the messenger, called, "Three green," and "Hover tension," indicating that he was ready to take cable tension.

The nugget was at the controls. Instead of remaining in place, he anticipated hover tension and drifted too far to the left. The RA hauldown cable was reeling in at 2 feet per second to take out the slack. The cable caught under the aft right corner of the RSD. This problem was not unusual and should not have been an emergency. The LSO usually just releases all tension, conns the helo to the right, checks that the cable is free, puts the aircraft back in place and starts over. But, in this case, I couldn't.

I tried unsuccessfully to call the aircraft to tell the crew to slide right. The HCO and flight deck safety observer, looking out of their windows, saw what was happening. The observer came over the 1JG saying, "The cable is under the RSD." The HCO came over the UHF in a panic, screaming, "Something's wrong down there!" He sounded like an "Action News" reporter. I saw that the HAC had assumed control just as the nugget started to yank a handful of collective. The RA hauldown cable snapped. The helo leaped 30 feet into the air and turned 30 degrees to the left while sliding into position almost completely over the left side of the deck edge. The HAC then returned the aircraft to a hover over the deck.

The pilots never heard my radio call. Fortune was with them, and the HAC acted quickly to avert a disaster. I told them what had happened. They pickled the remainder of the RA cable. The ship couldn't fix the cable immediately, and we decided to call it a night. I debriefed the ship's CO and XO on the incident.

After that evening, whenever I am the LSO, I never leave room for doubt about who is in control. I won't tolerate anyone clobbering the 1JG net or the UHF during flight quarters. A life might depend on someone keeping their mouth shut.

Lt. Cossette is an SH-60 HAC with HSL-46.

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Requiem for a Naval Aviator

By LCdr. James P. Donch

PART of him died today. It was a day to enjoy, to be glad he was alive, not a day in which to mourn. But, as he stepped outside into the bright sunlight, it was hard to fight back the tears and shame. He felt detached from reality.

"So this is what an out-of-body experience feels like," he thought.

Five months ago, he had looked forward to getting up. He hadn't flown for a while because he had been in an office working on various projects. Then, he got a chance to do what he enjoyed the most. The XO would be his copilot.

We all hear about mishaps, but we seldom hear about what may happen if you survive a mishap that could have been prevented. Perhaps by reading this story you might have a chance to think twice before taking a chance or deferring action.

The approach was bad, and he wanted to go around. But the senior pilot said no. The XO thought he had time and that there were several available options. He was wrong, however, and they crashed.

Miraculously, he returned to flight status two weeks later. He felt vindicated and swore to use his experience to educate others. After a flight, his CO met him and said that he, the Skipper, had received orders to FNAEB both pilots.

While he waited for the results of the board, sleep eluded him and self-doubt grew.

"This has to be the worst experience anyone can face," he told himself.

The findings finally came: A4 (continue flying as PIC with a year's probation). He was grateful for the chance to continue serving as a Naval Aviator. His CO's endorsement agreed with the recommendations, and an unbearable weight seemed to lift from him.

The wing commander had other ideas: B1, loss of flight status. The sleepless nights returned along with the self-doubt and recrimination. He was in limbo. Several months later, he walked out of the admiral's office in Washington. His fate was decided, and his life as a Naval Aviator was over. This wasn't a bad dream from which he could awaken. He would not fly again. Poor communication, relinquishing of authority, failure to recognize partial incapacitation – all were given as reasons.

We all hear about mishaps, but we seldom hear about what may happen if you survive a mishap that could have been prevented. Perhaps by reading this story you might have a chance to think twice before taking a chance or deferring action.

Ask yourself if it's worth it. If the situation is really bad or easily recognizable, you would probably take control. However, if the circumstances aren't so clear, would you press on? Do you or other pilots you fly with have egos that require nurturing? Being a copilot doesn't mean you are less capable. Have you ever been put down by a PIC? At the same time, PICs should not completely disregard their copilots' advice. The standard brief closing – "If you see anything, let me know" – should not be just empty words.

If a junior takes control, what would you do? If a senior says no, then what?

If you don't communicate with your fellow crew members, a mishap may be the result. Situational awareness (SA) is only as good as the lowest SA of the PAC. If your SA is

high, but the PAC's SA is low, the total SA in the cockpit is low. If you doubt your PAC's SA, take control, take command. Solve the problem before it bites you. Brief and hold everyone to that brief. Don't let egos get in the way of someone taking charge when needed.

You may not have been caught yet, but each time you tempt the beasts, they grow stronger and their chances of winning increase. If they win, you have to hope that "death" will be swift. If not, endless days and nights of reliving your mistakes lie ahead, a lifetime to regret your actions or inaction.

There is life after death, but its quality seems greatly reduced. I know, because this story happened to me. I can still wear my gold wings, but they are tarnished. No amount of polish will bring back their original luster.

Let me be a ghost in your life, past, present and future. Listen to me, think and respond, or the same fate awaits you.

LCdr. Donch has nearly 4,000 hours of flight time. He is TAD to NAS Norfolk.

Cruiser's Rules

By Lt. John D. "Cruiser" Hodges

Every aviator who bought the farm in the last few years broke one or more of "Cruiser's Rules."

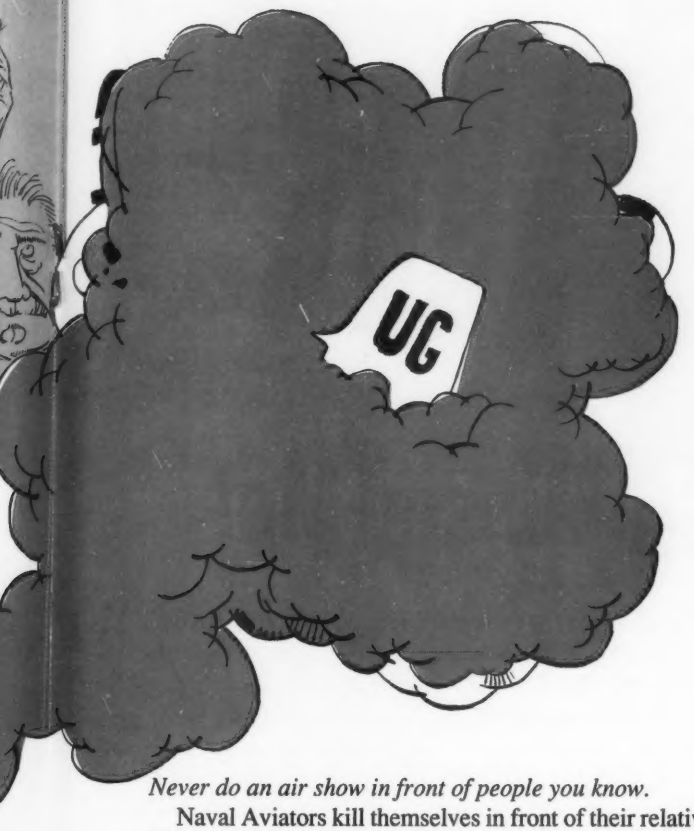
12 *Don't be first, and don't be last.*

WHEN someone crashes, there will always be one of two responses:

– That guy was marginal from the word go; I'm surprised he lasted this long.

– He was the best pilot in the air wing. How could he have done something like that?

No one is surprised when the marginal pilot dies. He squeaked by the entire time, but he was never bad enough to be grounded. At the same time, many outstanding pilots crash. During my fleet tour, half the guys who died were people you never expected to crash. They made the Commodore's List in the training command, were Top Gun in the RAG, and performed well behind the boat. Yet, they all did something wrong. Why? I think it's because they didn't know their limitations or were overconfident. These guys did so well that they couldn't imagine digging a hole so deep that they couldn't get out of it.



Never do an air show in front of people you know.

Naval Aviators kill themselves in front of their relatives. The typical scenario goes like this: A Naval Aviator goes on a cross-country to see his family and friends. When he is getting ready to leave, he tells them he will fly over a certain point (usually a deserted spot in the country) at a certain time. Mom, Pop and friends are at the designated place on time. The aviator decides he will impress them with his flying ability. He saw the Blue Angels and wants to demonstrate a few of their maneuvers. By the time his impromptu air show is over, however, his family and friends will see this intrepid young aviator drill himself into the ground.

Always keep your Page 2 up-to-date.

How many times has a pilot killed himself and it was discovered that everything was in order on his Page 2 and in his will? Not too many!

Never turn and descend on instruments below 5,000 feet.

It's a bad habit in the GCA pattern, and at night or in the goo. If you get distracted while making a descending turn, you can easily develop a tremendous rate-of-descent. Since you are already close to the ground and don't have the normal visual cues, a significant increase in descent rate can cause you to hit the water quickly.

Of course, any time your attention is diverted by warning lights, radio calls, whatever, little alarm bells should start sounding in your head. Many inexperienced approach controllers will give you a turn-and-descend call in the GCA pattern. However, I made it a practice to let them know that I will turn, *then* descend.

Don't screw it up.

This should be the last item on all briefing cards. I always gave my students this last piece of advice before we walked. If you think about it, it makes good sense. If you don't screw it up, you will be OK. Almost all problems occur because you screwed something up. Therefore, don't screw up the takeoff, rendezvous or landing.

Always use your taxi light at night at a strange field.

While I was in the training command, we had a new instructor arrive from a tour in F-14s. One of his first hops, after he became a qualified instructor pilot, was an out-and-in night instrument flight to a neighboring training base. After landing, this Sierra-Hotel fighter jock taxied to the transient line with his taxi light off. You can guess what happened. He became confused and drove his A-4 into the dirt.

Any instructor pilot who gets through a tour in the training command without a mishap or flight violation deserves the Distinguished Flying Cross.

There are few things more dangerous than instructing. To be an effective instructor you have to let the student make mistakes. If he is not allowed to make them, he won't learn. If his mistakes are not stopped in time, the results can be disastrous. Multiply this problem by 50 students in the same area, all making the same mistakes, and you can see that the odds are stacked against you. Throw in bad weather and things really get ugly.

If all of those things aren't bad enough, you still have to deal with ARTCC, whose job is to keep you from spilling out of the MOA and getting a violation.

If you can survive all that on a regular basis, and are successful in the teaching effort, you deserve the DFC.

Never fly a routine training mission.

Every time someone crashes, the article in the newspaper says he was "on a routine training mission." In the last 17 years, Naval Aviators have seldom been killed in combat, but every year we average 70-80 people who are killed on routine training missions. The key: Don't let any hop become routine. ◄

Lt. Hodges made three deployments with VA-15, flying the A-7E. He served as an instructor with VT-21, and is currently assigned as the Strike Operations Officer for Cruiser-Destroyer Group 1.

A MIDAIR!

Naww-w, He Missed Me!

By LCdr. Mark Danielson

"HE missed me!"

Those of us in the fighter business have heard these words all too often. The phrase might be preferable to "He hit me!" but the fact remains that we constantly press our safety bubble in the ACM environment. There is no such thing as a near-miss. If he missed you, it was a *near-hit.*

The FAA and Navy Training Rules agree that 500 feet is the closest acceptable distance between aircraft. Unfortunately, this 500-foot bubble is a hard thing to judge, especially from a head-on pass against a small target like an A-4, F-5 or F-16. The task becomes harder if neither pilot has visual contact.

HUD designs in modern fighters create two problems. First, the sheer thickness of the glass reduces forward visibility, particularly if there is glare. Second, when reading information on the HUD, the focal point for your eye is about five feet. When visually acquiring the bogey, your eyes have to focus to infinity. This difference in focal point distances creates a blind spot within the pilot's field of view. Other bogeys may go undetected.

While the F-14's HUD diamond directs you to the proper piece of sky (assuming a good radar lock), it doesn't tell you about other bogeys. Thick canopy bows, AOA indexers, and other equipment on the glare shield restrict visibility, and combined with pilots' attention being directed in one area, could result in a midair.

Since non-radar-equipped bogeys may not know where the fighters are (if the fighters are using proper tactics) the bogey pilots may be unaware of an impending collision until it's too late. Pilots should continually scan outside the cockpit, moving their heads around obstructions and occasionally focusing on distant objects like clouds or mountains.

Task saturation is a serious problem. In aircraft like the F/A-18, the pilot has to perform radar searches and sorts, acquire radar locks, visually acquire targets, and use weapons systems, all while maintaining tactical formation. Not only has task loading in the cockpit increased, but, in a dogfight, increased G loading may further reduce a pilot's ability to see the target due to gray-out. In multibogey, post-merge engagements, it is unlikely that the fighter pilot will be able to track all of the bogeys while keeping station. In this situation, the pilot tends to return to his radar scope and try to sort, making him a candidate for a midair.

While it is rare for a bogey pilot to lose sight of the larger Hornet after the merge, it is relatively easy for bogies to lose sight of their wingmen flying the same small aircraft, and make a simo-run on a fighter! There is no simple solution to this problem. Midair potential must be stressed in the brief, and the decision to bug out must be made early.

The problem of boresighting a bogey is certainly not limited to single-seat fighters. Too often, bogies are pressed in the forward quarter while the fighter tries to launch a minimum-range shot. Closure rates must be judged in seconds to determine when to break off an attack. Both pilots must be alert when breaking off an attack or transmitting their intentions.

While ACM sorties within the squadron do provide exciting training, they also are hazardous. Fighting your squad-

ronmates may become a matter of personal pride, never in short supply among fighter crews. It's easy to press, or even ignore, Training Rules in this arena.

Sometimes it seems that the only thing that matters is to win. Near hits occur in the multibogey ACM sorties when pilots lose sight of at least one aircraft, and continue pressing another. Unfortunately, pilots in the other aircraft are heavily involved in the fight and may not be aware of the "free" bogey's position. The stage is set for another near-hit unless pilots are willing to transmit that they have lost sight of someone, and break off the attack.

After engagements, several aircraft rendezvous in the same piece of sky. Crews try to write notes, check fuel and engine instruments, and join up with the flight leader. Considering the number of cockpit distractions and limited time available to reset to a CAP station, it isn't unusual for these aircraft to initially end up on the same side, all focusing their attention on their leader. Since peripheral vision normally only alerts you to movement, you my not detect aircraft closing with constant bearing and decreasing range from your blind side until they cross your flight path – too late for you to react. Then you realize once again that you are lucky to be alive.

Flying fighters is risky business. There is never a satisfactory excuse for a midair. At best, your career is over; at the worst, you're dead. I believe that there are only three types of pilots: inexperienced, experienced and statistical. To become an experienced pilot, avoid becoming a statistic!

LCdr. Danielson is the COMNAVAIRESFOR A-4 Evaluator, attached to Commander, Fleet Logistics Support Wing. He is a Topgun graduate and has flown over 4,000 hours in F-4s, A-4s, and T-2s.

GLOC? No, NORDO!

By Lt. Doug McGowen

WHAT could be better? A sunny, southern California day and a 1 v 1 ACM hop with an F-16. We were one turn into our second engagement when, after a good, hard pull, I felt the G start to relax on our jet. As the F-16 got into a better position, I began giving directive calls to my pilot, assuming he had lost sight of our adversary. He didn't answer, and as the Viper converted on our six, my calls became more frantic. Our jet was now in a 1-G, climbing right turn. I realized something was wrong as the F-16 closed to guns range and we made no attempt to defend ourselves.

I looked forward, and my heart jumped into my throat. The pilot's head was slumped forward and rolling from side to side. I called "Knock it off!" I thought he had GLOC.

I quickly recalled an incident where the RIO realized the pilot was unconscious only after they had passed 500 knots, beyond max speed for a safe ejection. Luckily, the pilot regained consciousness and recovered the aircraft.

As I called to my pilot and checked our airspeed, I decided that if he did not respond before we reached 450 knots, I would eject us. We were now in an easy right, nose-low turn with airspeed rising as rapidly as my voice. Just as it seemed we would have to punch out, I heard "Where is he?" over the ICS.

"I already knocked it off," I replied. "Are you OK? What happened?"

"Oh, my comm cord came unplugged," the pilot answered, "and I couldn't reconnect it." That explained his lack of response as well as the seemingly lifeless motion of his head as he tried to reconnect the cord.

Of course, I was happy he was still flying the aircraft. Then, I was mortified to realize I had almost wasted a 40-million-dollar F-14. How did the situation deteriorate so quickly when nothing was wrong? I'd been in emergencies before, but a simple comm cord got my knees shaking more than anything I had experienced. The answer was simple: crew coordination.

After we landed, we decided that there were several things we could have done to prevent the confusion. The pilot had tried to rock his wings to indicate he was NORDO, but the motion was fairly mild and didn't get my attention, nor that of the F-16 pilot. More aggressive wing rocks, followed by appropriate NORDO hand signals, would have gotten the point across. I only used the ICS. If I had removed my mask, I could have gotten the pilot's attention. Aircrews must decide among themselves what visual signals they should use.

I always heard it's the unbriefed and unexpected that reach up and bite you. Up to that point, our crew coordination had been excellent. This incident told us we needed to re-examine our procedures. ◄

Lt. McGowen is a RIO with VF-111.

Left to right: Cpl. Brian A. Johnson, USMC; Capt. Paul J. Borror, USMC; Sgt. Jimmie L. Potter, USMC; Capt. Eugene T. McBride, USMC

Capt. Eugene T. McBride, USMC
Capt. Paul J. Borror, USMC
Sgt. Jimmie L. Potter, USMC
Cpl. Brian A. Johnson, USMC
SOMS Kaneohe Bay

While on plane-guard duty for deck landing qualifications at night, this CH-46 crew heard the ship's tower call, "Aircraft down! Aircraft down!" Capt. Borror (copilot) saw the downed helicopter and guided the Sea Knight to it. As they arrived over the crash site, the already bad weather intensified, disrupting their aircraft's doppler. As Cpl. Johnson (Crew Chief) prepared the aircraft for recovery, Sgt. Potter (SAR swimmer) got ready to enter Molokai Channel, which had 15-foot swells.

Despite the intermittent doppler, no moon, and driving rain and blinding searchlights from the ship, the two pilots stabilized their helo in a 50-foot hover near two survivors' strobe lights. Sgt. Potter recovered the first survivor (the copilot), but had to remain in the water apart from the second survivor. Cpl. Johnson hoisted the first survivor aboard, then guided his aircraft back to Sgt. Potter and "short-hauled" (repositioned the helo with the swimmer on the hoist) him back to recover the second crewman.

The rescue was further complicated by saltwater-actuated LPP lights and two launches from the ship, which swept their searchlights back and forth in the heavy seas. All these factors created a dangerous, vertigo-inducing environment. Capt. McBride and Capt. Borror continued flying the aircraft together, passing control back and forth to relieve fatigue. Sgt. Potter recovered a third survivor approximately 300 yards from the first two.

Capt. McBride, Capt. Borror and Cpl. Johnson have been recommended for Air Medals, and Sgt. Potter has been recommended for the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

Lt. Paul Driver
Lt. Ed Sandford
Lt. Kevin McCarty
Lt. Darryl Barrickman
AT1 Eric Whisman
VAW-123

After takeoff from NAS Brunswick, Lt. McCarty (mission commander) reported engine oil leaking from the E-2C's right nacelle. The aircraft had a recent history of engine oil leaks, but had flown two flights with no problems. Although a check of his engine instruments showed no abnormal indications, Lt. Driver (PIC) decided to play it safe and return to the field.

As he turned toward Brunswick, oil began streaming from the right nacelle. The crew reviewed single-engine ap-

Left to right: Lt. Ed Sandford, Lt. Paul Driver

BRAVO ZULU

proach procedures and completed the landing checklist. Although NATOPS recommends using arresting gear, that option was not available because the station snowplow had disabled the gear, and there was snow and ice on the runway.

One mile from touchdown, the low-oil warning light and master caution lights illuminated, followed by large fluctuations in oil pressure. Lt. Driver made a left 360-degree turn while Lt. Sandford (copilot) secured the engine, completed the post-shutdown checklist, and declared an emergency.

Lt. Driver flew a single-engine approach, ensuring touchdown past the icy portion of the runway. Once on deck, he used minimum reverse power on the left engine, rudders, differential braking and nosewheel steering to stay on the runway. He then taxied off the runway and secured the left engine. The Hawkeye was towed to the transient line.

Capt. J.M. Lukas, USMC
Capt. W.E. Kaufer, USMC
VMFAT-101

Following the knock-it-off call on a 1 v 1 BFM sortie, Capt. Lukas turned his section of Hornets and began accelerating in military power. Almost immediately, he heard an "engine right" voice alert with an accompanying EGT caution on the DDI. Capt. Lukas retarded the throttle to idle and saw the EGT overtemp condition along with an indication that the nozzle had failed in the open position. Capt. Kaufer began maneuvering his F/A-18 to inspect Capt. Lukas's aircraft as they headed back to El Toro. Capt. Kaufer saw that his lead's right nozzle had actually failed in the closed position.

Capt. Lukas was using afterburner on the left engine to increase airspeed when Capt. Kaufer saw the left nozzle begin glowing bright red, with sparks coming from the nozzle. He told Capt. Lukas that the left nozzle was on fire and Capt. Lukas retarded that throttle to idle. Further inspection revealed damage to the left nozzle from the 10 o'clock to the 12 o'clock position.

Capt. Lukas's Hornet now had two problems. One engine was not putting out full thrust because of overtemping and a failed nozzle. The second engine had been damaged by fire. Capt. Lukas declared an emergency and continued toward the field. He kept the left engine at idle while modulating the right throttle. He flew a single-engine, straight-in approach to a landing.

The nozzle problems were not related. The nozzle indicator transmitter had failed, causing the right engine's condition. A failure of the inner seal on the left nozzle allowed the afterburner exhaust to focus on the outer flap and damage the left nozzle.

From left to right:
Capt. J.M. Lukas, USMC
Capt. W.E. Kaufer, USMC

Safety Is Paramount!
Oh, Really?

By Cdr. J.R. Worthington

"SAFETY is *paramount!*"

"Safety is our *number one* priority!"

Oh, really? How many times have you heard these cliches announced by your safety czar, and reaffirmed by your CO at the AOM? You want to shout, "Sure, of course, we want to be safe, but be honest, Rocket One – combat readiness is most important."

You hear, "Dental readiness is priority one!" You can insert any appropriate phrase. "Administrative excellence," "High FMC/MC rates," or "NADSAP completions." Whatever captures the current spotlight. The point is, the CO sets the priorities. He decides by his example if safety *is* number one.

A squadron that pays more than lip service to safety sees safety as an operational leadership effort to be addressed at all levels of the command. Professor K. Montor, in his collections on leadership, *Naval Leadership: Voices of Experience,* says, "Safety is as much a part of the infrastructure of sound leadership techniques as are defining the problems, determining assets and requirements, setting goals, or fixing milestones." Many leaders fail to realize this and view safety as a separate entity that should be handled as a separate problem.

Since the preservation of our assets is essential to combat readiness, decisions affecting readiness, if made using the basic tenets of leadership, would most certainly be made with an eye to risk assessment. How does a CO maintain superior combat readiness while maintaining a "safety first" outlook?

Communication. The skipper should frequently and consistently relay his ideas and standards of safety. His infrequent, informal, as well as formal, quarters should emphasize solid maintenance procedures, safety on the job, and safety at home, and the use of seat belts in the family car. He should mandate writing and safety poster programs for internal and external publication.

He should hold an AOM to talk professional flying in a relaxed, give-and-take forum. JOs pick up on how the skipper thinks, what he thinks is cool, or foolhardy. The decisions they make in the air on cross-countries will reflect command philosophy more if they know their CO better.

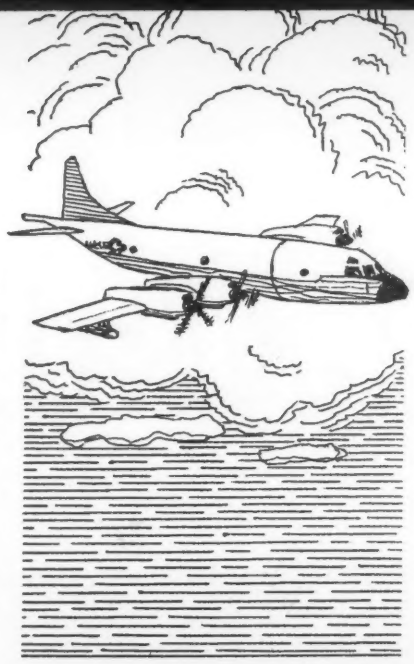
Safety Department. A strong, and believable, Safety Department is vital. The Safety Officer should be a screenable player, either waiting to go to Operations or Maintenance, or having completed a successful tour in one of these major billets. His staff should include his fair share of the top JOs in the squadron.

Maintenance Department. Consistency is the long and the short of the problem. If safety is first, it will show up in daily decisions made in the Maintenance Department. Do you accept aircraft that have an excessive number of "up"-gripes? Do you get the generator fixed *now*, or do you fly first and fix it afterward? The QAs couldn't find that fastener in the cockpit. Should they pull the seats now, or *after* the next flight? Every time a squadron decides to wait to fix a problem, the troops get a message that safety might *not* be first.

Operations Department. A "hands-on" Ops Officer is the key ingredient to safety first. He needs to know his crew members as individuals. Not everyone can fly with *any*one. "They're all qualified aviators" doesn't hack it. The Ops Officer has to be in tune with the CO's commitment to safety. He must be willing to keep operational goals balanced against risk assessment. Do you qualify section leaders by time on board, or do you have a qualification program that includes letting JOs regularly brief and lead formations? How many days do you allow without flying before a weapons system trainer? Who chops the flight schedule: the XO or the Safety Officer?

Safety has to be part of every squadron's entire operation, not considered *just* another department. Only when safety permeates every decision as an important facet of sound leadership will it be *paramount . . . really!*

Cdr. Worthington is the CO of VA-95.



How We Bombed Our Playmate

By Lt. Patrick McCormack

COORDINATED ops missions can be headaches with all the comm drills and worrying about air separation. But this mission was going to be great: a training exercise with a DDG and a submarine, banker's hours and a mission-ready crew.

I had flown hundreds of hours with the pilot. I was the TACCO-Mission Commander with three deployments under my belt. Our biggest concern was how to get on the sub the fastest and with the mostest.

The check-in with the DDG was easy. From our 1,000-foot altitude, she looked sharp, cutting a light blue wake on the dark sea. Her crew was friendly and professional. We quickly built up a good rapport over the UHF, and we soon learned the ship knew her ASW.

We had a blast for the first three hours. The ASW was great, and we tested all our ESM, radar and comm equipment. The first pilot and I let our JOs run the problem for a while.

At one point in the exercise, the submerged sub drew in relatively close to the ship. At this point, the pilot and I were back in our seats, and we had good data on the sub's position. I told my pilot I wanted to put a sonobuoy in close to the "unit" and wanted to "mark on top" so I could time my release. He agreed and steered in as I selected the buoy. As I made the selection with the aircraft computer, I saw our aircraft heading right for the submarine on the computer's tactical display. I was completely "inside" the aircraft, and my pilot was looking outside.

After a minute, the pilot said we were coming in for the mark. I looked at the display, and I saw we were approaching the sub's position. I also saw we had a buoy release "go" light. The pilot called the mark just as I saw the aircraft symbol, and the sub's computer track nearly superimposed on my display.

"Buoy away," I called as I pressed the release switch.

"Oh, no," the pilot said, just as I was looking out of my window to see the ship's wake passing beneath us. We had just bombed the destroyer!

My first thought was to call the ship and warn them. But the buoy would be there before I finished the call, and there was no action the ship could take. I hoped no one was walking around on deck.

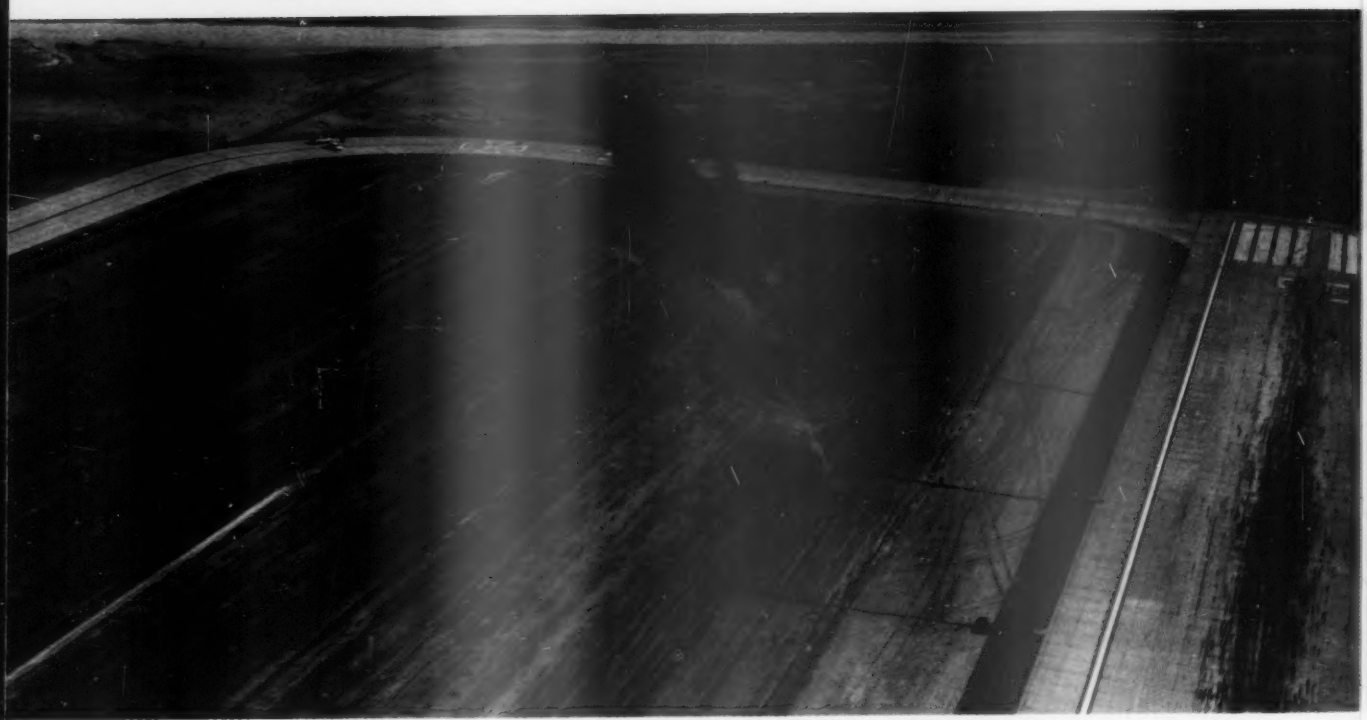
If the buoy hit the water, it would transmit its RF signal. I dialed up the buoy's channel and listened. My career as a Naval Officer might be finished, depending on that darn buoy. Thankfully, the buoy sounded off. It had hit the water, not the ship.

I knew what had happened. I wanted to mark the sub's position and put the buoy in close to it. The pilot thought I wanted to mark on the ship, wait a safe distance, and put the buoy in close because the sub was drawing in close to the ship. My use of "unit" instead of "sub" had confused him. I had reminded the pilot of our long-standing rule to turn off "search-power" in the flight station when in an unsafe area to drop buoys. Turning off search-power prevents buoy release.

I waited for the ship – our buddy – to give us a nasty call. But after a few minutes, I didn't hear anything, and I got on the radio and asked, "So, how's that submarine contact doing?" We didn't let him in on our little secret. But my pilot and I never forgot. ◄

Lt. McCormack is an Operational Test Director with VX-1. He served as NATOPS Officer in his fleet squadron.

Callsign:



Scorch marks show where Prowler came to rest at the departure end of the runway.

"TYPICAL conehead," the ECMO instructor thought to himself as he listened to the pilot dress down the young jaygee in the Prowler's right front seat.

"How do you expect me to understand the clearance with the ground controller babbling on the other radio? Does it make sense to have those two freqs selected at the same time?" the pilot asked angrily.

"Ah, no sir," the replacement ECMO responded.

"I've got the radios," the pilot shot back. "I'll tell you what, buddy, you've been behind the power curve since the brief this morning. This definitely hasn't been one of your better hops."

"Baggage"

ECMO-3 was glad his pilot had the situation under control, because he just didn't feel like getting worked up over student screw-ups this afternoon. The backseat instructor just wanted to kick back for the leg home. The agitated chatter between the two aviators in the front seats became a pleasant buzz as he relaxed in the back of the EA-6B and thought about what he had accomplished that day. As the Prowler took the duty runway, ECMO-3 stared at the instruments and smiled a self-satisfied smile. Face time with the prospective boss at the change-of-command and a student "X" to boot.

The J-52s roared to military power, and the pilot released the brakes. The jet picked up speed as it trundled down the concrete strip. At rotation, the pilot exclaimed, "Wow, what a stab stall!"

Minutes earlier, one of the transient line guys had watched the Prowler taxi out. The young enlisted man had just come from a VAQ squadron and felt a certain nostalgia for his plane captain days whenever he saw one of the "old birds."

As he looked closer, he found it strange that the jet started to roll with the flaps up and slats in. Had something changed since he had left the community?

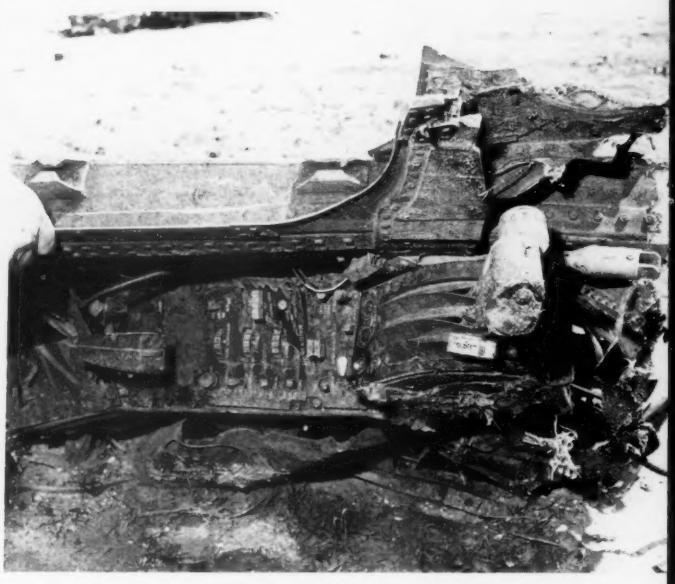
The lineman continued to watch as the Prowler started a slow climb. The airplane reached 50 feet, and the left wing dropped, then dug into the turf on the left side of the runway. An ejection seat fired. The aircraft hit the ground and began to cartwheel. A second seat fired. This time there was no chute. Then – nothing but a fireball.

The lineman spotted one aviator stumbling away from the wreckage and ran toward him to help. As he took off toward the infield in a full sprint, the enlisted man wondered how the crew could have overlooked such obvious items on the takeoff checks.

It is ironic that of the three crewmen in the airplane, the aviator with no situational awareness (compared to *not enough* situational awareness by the other two) is the only one who survived. Had ECMO-3 been an active member of the crew and listened to the progress of the checklists, he might have caught the critical oversight. At the very least, all he had to do was look out the canopy when the jet was in the hold-short and verify the slats were extended. The irony of his survival is heightened by the fact he didn't even initiate his own ejection. ECMO-3's role in this mishap is not an example of poor crew coordination. It is an example of *no* crew coordination.

As for the pilot and ECMO-1, the lesson they forgot is, if you interrupt a checklist, for whatever reason, pick it up where you left off. If you can't remember where that is, start over – from the top.

◄ 21



This view clearly shows the burnt throttle quadrant with the flap handle in the "up" position.

How to Screw Up a Throttle

By Lt. John B. Shaulis

I LED three Advanced Strike Flight students out to USS *Lexington* for A-4 carrier qualifications. A wing flight surgeon rode in my back seat. After I dropped off the students in the pattern, I anchored overhead at 3,500 feet.

The deck worked smoothly, and the Boss brought us down for a trap and gas. After refueling, we taxied up to the shuttle. Military power, a good wipeout, and a salute to the cat officer, and we were flying. After leveling off, I tried to pull the power back, but it would only reduce to 93 percent. The throttle range in both cockpits was 93 percent to military. After accelerating straight ahead and clearing the stack overhead, we turned toward NAS Key West 60 miles away, and climbed to 9,500 feet.

We declared an emergency and received priority handling by Tarpon Range Control and Key West Approach. With power set at 93 percent, the aircraft cruised clean at 425 knots.

The weather was clear, wind only 3-5 knots from the north, and the active runway was 3, with 7,000 feet. I decided to set up for a stuck-throttle arrested landing for runway 7 because the crosswinds were negligible. The 10,000-foot runway was also longer in case of a hook skip. Runway 10 also presented the shortest distance to getting the aircraft safely on deck.

I descended to 1,500 feet with my speedbrakes out until I was within 10 miles of the field. I began a nose-up, climbing turn with moderate G to slow the aircraft to gear-and-flap speed. With the throttle at 93 percent, and with gear and full flaps, we maintained 200 knots, with 2,500 pounds of fuel. I decided to fly to the east of downtown for a three-mile base leg to avoid populated areas.

I intercepted a centered ball, flew it to the calculated shutdown altitude, retarded the manual fuel shutoff, and engaged the short-field arresting gear.

We got a ride back to the CNATRA A-4 hotpad and met with the maintenance folks for a passdown. While I took off my flight gear in the paraloft, I noticed that the right-hand screw from my helmet chin strap was missing. Sure enough, it was in the throttle quadrant.

Preflight your flight gear. My new HGU-55P helmet was only two weeks old, and if I had looked closely, I might have noticed the loose screw.

Practice your simulated emergencies whenever you can. I normally see two or three simulated stuck throttle approaches each week at TraWing Three. I was prepared and was completely confident in my emergency procedures.

Crew coordination is vital. The flight surgeon behind me played a valuable role in backing me up with the pocket checklist.

Read the mishap board for your aircraft type. Our wing's staff pilots are required to read a safety message board that provides numerous MIRs and flag endorsements relating to the A-4. Read it and be informed. ◄

Lt. Shaulis is the A-4 Standardization Officer for TraWing Three. He flew the US-3A in the fleet and will report to VS-41.

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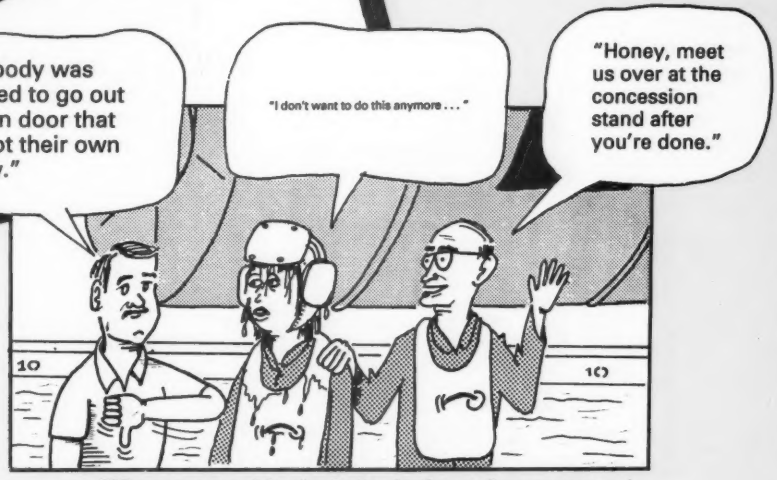
BROWNSHOES IN ACTION COMIX

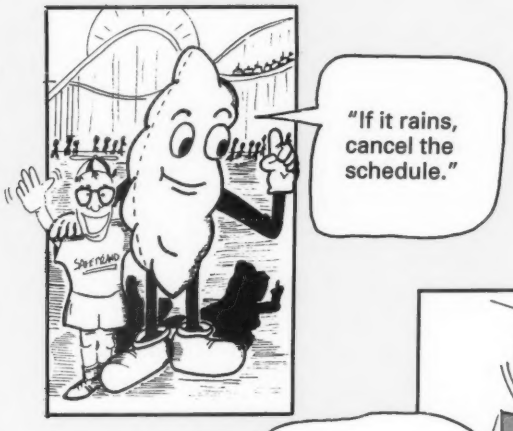
"The kind real aviators like"

Contributed by Lt. Ward Carroll

"We met Cloudman, and he gave us some great weather tips . . ."


"Everybody was supposed to go out the main door that time, not their own window."
"I don't want to do this anymore . . ."
"Honey, meet us over at the concession stand after you're done."

"Mom got to ride the helo dunker a few more times than the rest of the family . . ."



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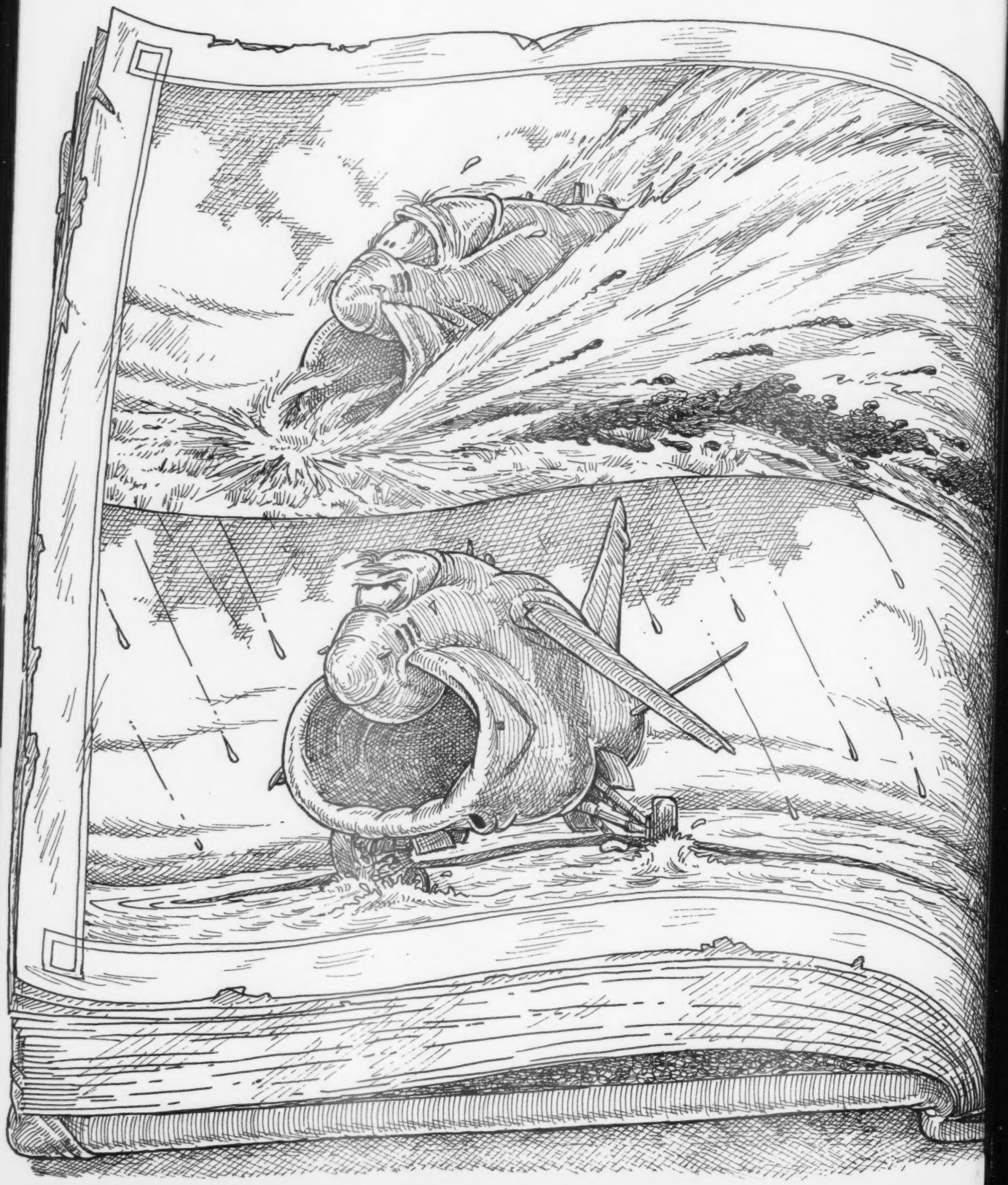
"Dad got a little silly in the altitude chamber. The Flight Surgeon said it was hypoxia . . ."